

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7189
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 849

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, WA, SF
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE SAG DECISION

1. SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA PRESUMABLY PREVAILED WITH VORSTER AND THE CABINET ON THE NAMIBIA ISSUE ON THE GROUND THAT THE RISKS OF PURSUING AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT WERE GREATER THAN THOSE INHERENT IN ACCEPTING THE WESTERN PROPOSAL. BOTHA VERY LIKELY EMPHASIZED THE INTERNATIONAL ADVANTAGES FOR THE SAG AND ARGUED THAT WHETHER SWAPO ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL OR NOT, SAG ACCEPTANCE WOULD TIE THE WEST TO SOUTH AFRICA. GROUPS IN NAMIBIA, INCLUDING DIRK MUDGE AND THE CHURCH LEADERS, ALSO HELPED TO SHAPE THE FINAL DECISION. WESTERN REACTION TO THE DECISION
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HAS ALREADY SERVED TO RELIEVE SOMEWHAT SOUTH AFRICA'S PROFOUND SENSE OF ISOLATION AND OF AN ACCELERATING NATIONAL CRISIS. IF THINGS GO WELL IN NAMIBIA, IT COULD IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT FOR SOUTH AFRICAN COOPERATION ON OTHER MATTERS, PERHAPS INCLUDING THE NUCLEAR ISSUE AND RHODESIA. IN THE LONGER TERM, THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF NAMIBIA COULD HAVE AN

INDIRECT IMPACT ON THE PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER PIK BOTHA'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN WINNING SAG ACCEPTANCE OF THE WESTERN PROPOSAL ON NAMIBIA IS IMPRESSIVE WHEN VIEWED AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF NATIONALIST POLEMICS AND POLICIES. FOR YEARS THE SAG HAS BEEN DENIGRATING THE UN IN GENERAL AND, UNTIL A YEAR AGO, REJECTING ANY UN ROLE IN SOUTH WEST AFRICA. MOREOVER, NATIONALIST LEADERS, WHILE CIRCLING THE WAGONS, HAVE BEEN PLAYING ON THE THEME OF WESTERN, AND PARTICULARLY US BETRAYAL, UNRELIABILITY AND IMPLACABLE HOSTILITY. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY HAVE CONTINUED TO HARP ON THE DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR WHITE MINORITIES OF BLACK MAJORITY RULE.

3. WHILE GENERATING THEIR OWN SHARE OF THESE POLEMICS OVER THE PAST YEAR, BOTHA AND VORSTER SUCCESSIVELY CAST ASIDE THE TURNHALLE SOLUTION FOR SOUTH WEST; ACQUIESCED IN--IF INDEED THEY DID NOT ENCOURAGE--A SPLIT IN THE SWA NATIONALIST PARTY TO GIVE THE TURNHALLE GROUP MOMENTUM AND CREDIBILITY; ACCEPTED ONE MAN ONE VOTE ELECTIONS; AND BEGAN TO DISMANTLE THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE APARTHEID STRUCTURE IN SOUTH WEST. ON APRIL 25, THEY TOOK THE LAST STEP IN THEIR PROCESS AND AGREED TO THE WESTERN PROPOSAL INVOLVING IN EFFECT UN SUPERVISION AND

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CONTROL OF ELECTIONS AND THE TRANSITION OF THE TERRITORY TO INDEPENDENCE.

4. BOTHA PRESUMABLY PREVAILED WITH VORSTER AND IN THE CABINET ON THE GROUND THAT THE RISKS OF PURSUING AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT WERE GREATER THAN THOSE INHERENT IN ACCEPTING THE WESTERN PROPOSAL: (A) TURNING ASIDE THE WESTERN INITIATIVE WOULD MEAN CONTINUATION OF THE GUERRILLA WAR, FURTHER OSTRACISM BY THE WEST AND QUITE POSSIBLY SANCTIONS; (B) IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ACCEPTED BY SOUTH AFRICA AND IMPLEMENTED, THE COSTLY WAR WOULD END, SOUTH AFRICA WOULD GAIN IN MORAL STANDING, AND SANCTIONS WOULD BE AVERTED; (C) EVEN IF THE WESTERN INITIATIVE FOUNDERED FOR LACK OF SWAPO AND AFRICAN AGREEMENT, SOUTH AFRICA WOULD STILL HAVE IMPROVED ITS STANDING IN THE WEST WHICH IN TURN WOULD PROBABLY PREVENT SANCTIONS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN HELPED BY A VERKRAMPTE VIEW THAT, ONCE HAVING AGREED TO ONE MAN ONE VOTE AND INDEPENDENCE FOR NAMIBIA, IT WOULD BE SHORTSIGHTED FOR SOUTH AFRICA TO RISK HIGH STAKES IN ORDER TO OBTAIN A PUPPET BLACK REGIME, WHICH INEVITABLY, IN TRADITIONAL

VERKRAMPTE PERCEPTION, WOULD TURN RADICAL AND DISPOSSESS THE
WHITE POPULATION ANYWAY.

5. WHETHER OR NOT BOTHA BELIEVES THE WESTERN PROPOSAL CAN BE
IMPLEMENTED AND HE MAY HAVE TOLD THE CABINET HE DOES NOT THINK
SWAPO WILL GO ALONG--WE SUSPECT ONE OF HIS MOT TELLING ARGUMENTS
WAS THAT ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL WOULD TIE THE WEST TO
SOUTH AFRICA. IN THE WAKE OF SAG ACCEPTANCE, MUCH
IS BEING MADE OF THIS POINT, QUITE POSSIBLY INSPIRED
BY BOTHA. AS THE CAPE TIMES SAID ON APRIL 26,
"AT LEAST SOUTH AFRICA IS NOW LOCKED IN WITH THE WEST,...
IT IS COMFORTABLY LOCKED IN--NOT TENUOUSLY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 849

COVERTLY, AND THUS HIGHLY UNSATISFACTORILY AS
HAPPENED IN ANGOLA." MEDIA COMMENTARY HERE HAS
STRESSED THAT (A) IT IS NOW UP TO THE WEST TO FOLLOW
THROUGH, I. E., IF SWAPO DOES NOT ACCEPT, THE
FIVE POWERS WILL BE OBLIGED TO LEND SOME MEASURE OF
SUPPORT TO ONE MAN ONE VOTE ELECTIONS IN THE TERRITORY
WITHOUT SWAPO PARTICIPATION, OR (B) IF THERE IS SWAPO
AGREEMENT, THE WEST WILL BE COMMITTED TO SEEING THAT

IT WORKS AND THAT THERE IS NO OUTSIDE
INTERFERENCE. CREDIT FOR THE SAG DECISION SHOULD
ALSO GO TO DTA CHAIRMAN DIRK MUDGE, WHO SUPPORTED
BOTH A AND WHO APPARENTLY REPORTED THAT HE BELIEVED
SWAPO COULD BE DENIED A MAJORITY IN A FREE ELECTION.
SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSAL FROM CHURCH LEADERS AND
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OTHER GROUPS IN NAMIBIA ALSO HELPED TO SHAPE THE
FINAL DECISION.

6. THE SOUTH AFRICAN DECISION HAS IMPLICATIONS
BEYOND THE FUTURE OF NAMIBIA ITSELF. FIRST OF ALL,
THE UNACCUSTOMED SOUNDS OF PRAISE FROM WASHINGTON
AND OTHER CAPITALS PROMISES TO RELIEVE SOMEWHAT SOUTH AFRICA'S
PROFOUND SENSE OF ISOLATION AND OF AN ACCELERATING
NATIONAL CRISIS. DIE BURGER, THE NATIONAL PARTY
ORGAN IN THE CAPE, WAS ECSTATIC. VORSTER'S DECISION,
THE PAPER SAID ON APRIL 26, "WILL PROBABLY DETERMINE
THE DESTINY OF THE PEOPLE OF THE ENTIRE SOUTHERN
AFRICA, POSSIBLY THE CONTINENT, PERHAPS EVEN THE WORLD."

7. IF THINGS GO WELL IN NAMIBIA, IT COULD IMPROVE THE
ENVIRONMENT FOR SOUTH AFRICAN COOPERATION ON OTHER
MATTERS, PERHAPS INCLUDING THE NUCLEAR ISSUE. VORSTER
AND BOTH A WILL WANT TO MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM OF A SOUTH AFRICAN
DIPLOMATIC REVIVAL TO HALT, AND IF POSSIBLE, TO REVERSE THE
DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS WITH THE WEST. THUS, THE SAG
MIGHT BECOME MORE FAVORABLY DISPOSED THAN BEFORE TO AN INTER-
NATIONAL SETTLEMENT IN RHODESIA LEST FAILURE THERE THREATEN
SOUTH AFRICA'S NOW LESS GLOOMY PROSPECTS. IT REMAINS TO
BE SEEN, HOWEVER, HOW FAR SOUTH AFRICA WOULD BE WILLING
TO GO IN ATTEMPTING TO MOVE DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS DIRECTION.

8. THE DECISION RECONFIRMS THAT PIK BOTH A AND VORSTER,
DESPITE THEIR PUBLIC POSTURING, ARE ESSENTIALLY
PRAGMATISTS AND THAT THE NATIONALIST PARTY AND THE
WHITE POPULATION CAN BE BROUGHT ALONG BY THE LEADERSHIP
TO ACCEPT SIGNIFICANT SHIFTS IN POLICY. IT ALSO
SUGGESTS THAT PIK BOTH A'S DARK HORSE CANDIDACY FOR
SUCCESSION TO THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP HAS MOVED UP
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SOMEWHAT ON THE TWO LEADING CONTENDERS, CONNIE MULDER
AND P.W. BOTH A. DESPITE REPORTED EFFORTS BY
VERKRAMPTE ELEMENTS TO UNDERCUT BOTH A IN THE

PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE NAMIBIAN ISSUE, VORSTER IN THE END BACKED HIS PROTEGE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER. P.W. BOTHA'S RATTLING THE BONES OF ANGOLA A WEEK BEFORE THE CABINET DECISION UNDERSCORED HIS MERCURIAL NATURE, WHICH IS GENERALLY SAID TO BE HIS MAIN HANDICAP IN THE PREMIERSHIP STAKES. IF THINGS WORK OUT WELL IN NAMIBIA, PIK COULD CONCEIVABLY MOVE UP AHEAD OF P.W. AND BECOME THE MAIN CHALLENGER TO MULDER.

9. THE NEXT STEPS WILL BE SHAPED BY THE DECISIONS OF SWAPO AND THE AFRICAN STATES. EVEN IF THE PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED ALL AROUND, A PEACEFUL, INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED SETTLEMENT COULD GO OFF THE TRACKS AS A RESULT OF SOUTH AFRICAN OR SWAPO VIOLATIONS OF EITHER THE SPIRIT OR THE LETTER OF THE AGREEMENT. IN THE LONGER TERM, THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF NAMIBIA WHATEVER COURSE IT TAKES COULD HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROSPECTS FOR BASIC CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA. IF A ONE MAN ONE VOTE SOLUTION CAN LEAD TO A REASONABLY STABLE AND DEMOCRATIC MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY UNDER A BLACK GOVERNMENT IN NAMIBIA, IT WILL LIKELY HAVE SOME POSITIVE EFFECT ON POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN SOUTH AFRICA ITSELF. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF IT ENDS IN RADICALISM AND THE FLIGHT OF THE WHITES, IT WILL CONFIRM THE WHITE POPULATION IN SOUTH AFRICA IN ITS FEAR OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF A SHARED SOCIETY.
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